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OUT WEST WINNIPEG AND THE PRAIRIE

OUT WEST

OUT WEST

SKETCHES OF
ADIAN PRAIRIE LIFE

By
E. Pearse Wheatley

The
homesteader
at home

Cities
and their
beginnings



HARDSHIPS AND REWARDS.

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OUT WEST

SKETCHES OF PRAIRIE LIFE



HUNTING DUCKS.

Prairie Dwellers enjoy plenty of hunting. Duck, Partridges, Moose, Elk and Jumping Deer in the wooded country to the North, and Grouse (Prairie Chicken) on the Plains of the three Prairie Provinces.

OUT WEST

SKETCHES OF PRAIRIE LIFE

BY

E. PEARSE WHEATLEY

AUTHOR OF

“LETTERS OF A HOMESTEADER,” ETC., ETC.

LONDON :

THOMAS MURBY & CO., 6, BOUVERIE STREET, E.C.

To
A. L. W.,

PREFACE.

PREFACES are an abomination of desolation, but a couple of words are necessary.

Firstly, then, these sketches describe real conditions and are drawn from the actual experiences of an Englishman who knows the West.

Secondly (and lastly), the writer thanks *The Canadian Gazette*, *The Weekly Telegraph* and *The Boys' Own Paper* for their courtesy in permitting him to reprint articles which have appeared in their pages; and the Canadian Government and Canadian Pacific Railway for the use of photographs.

E. P. W.

EXETER,
DEVON.



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THE HOMESTEADER.

*Wind-swept and fire-swept and swept with bitter rain,
This was the world I came to when I came across the sea,
Sun-drenched and panting, a pregnant, waiting plain
Calling out to human-kind, calling out to me !*

* * * * *

*I've fought the wind and braved it. I cringe to it no more !
I've fought the creeping fire back and cheered to see it die.
I've shut the bitter rain outside and safe within my door
Laughed to think I feared a thing not as strong as I !*

* * * * *

*And this is what I came to when I fared across the sea,
Miles and miles of unused sky and miles of unturned loam,
And miles of room for someone else and miles of room for me,
The cry of exile changing to the sweeter cry of " Home ! "*

ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY,
In *The Youths' Companion*.

ACROSS THE HERRING POND.

"THE Herring Pond" is now not merely a nickname; it stands for a fact—the fact that the Atlantic passage is, at its shortest crossing, reduced to four days, that it is safer to cross the ocean than the streets of London, that holidays from Canada to England in the winter and from England to Canada in the summer are increasing in number and popularity literally by leaps and bounds.

In a word, the passage to Canada has become a picnic.

The "Land Lubber" has come into his own. Poor Old Neptune is now thoroughly civilised. England and Canada between them have made a gentleman of him. The Empire and the All-Red Route will have him an Imperialist.

The business man who thinks of Canada as a "foreign market" beyond the seas is as mistaken as the emigrant who dreads the water. Both forget that to all intents and purposes you are on land all the time. You step aboard a floating world at Liverpool or Bristol, and the throbbing engines push it across the sea. There is no alternative, and the routine of each day is almost monotonous.

Storms may shriek and howl; the monster liner rises and falls a wee bit further, but no faster. A gale may blow against her, but the speed is maintained. Icebergs are sighted; whales spout along-

side, and the sun sinks in battlements of stormy cloud. But the daily paper comes out with mechanical regularity, games and concerts engross the population, and the business man does business on the London and Montreal markets and dictates letters to his typist, for all the world as if he were at home in his office.

Is there, then, *no* romance of the high seas?

Suppose you have stepped aboard for your first voyage Westward Ho! The varied life is like a cinematograph, and when you are tired of watching it you go below to eight o'clock dinner. The salt air and the enticing menu mean a good meal, and afterwards you loll on deck quite convinced you are a sailor born.

During the night, however, the wind rises, and as you dress in the morning the cabin lifts and falls slowly. You walk a trifle erratically down the long electric-lit corridor. Will it never end? And why must you sometimes walk up hill, sometimes down? A creaking runs through the ship; a door slams somewhere; you get a whiff of breakfast, and you rush headlong past the dining-saloon, climb the now reeling stairs and make for the deck.

Kind friends, a curtain! "Nature's spring cleaning" is one of the healthiest, finest things on earth—or sea, but in the process you fear you will *not* die.

The real magic of the voyage begins when you have found your sea-legs. The before-breakfast blow is pure undiluted tonic. The storm is over. Hills of water still wander along the horizon, but the bright sunshine turns the sea blue and white. Near at hand green chasms yawn along beside the

ship, and tumbling worlds foam, surging level with the gunwale.

To sit on the top deck at noon and watch a seething waste of waters is better than ploughing through a sea of glass, and both are good.

But all this is nothing to the excitement of "Land Ho!" The low rim comes nearer, rises up out of the sea, turns into frowning cliffs at which the ship charges boldly. Presently a channel opens and you are in Belle Isle Straits fortunate if you see it as it is sometimes seen. A flaming sunset above, a flaming reflection below, distant purple shores, and here and there white icebergs gleaming.

Dusk falls, and you need a thick coat if you are going to watch the stars come out and the rainbows of phosphorescence at the ship's prow; but next day in the Gulf of St. Lawrence it is summer again. Vegetation and heat and the indescribable smell of the land. With the next night the voyage is over; the lights of Quebec help Nature's hypnotism, and as you sit and drink it all in you realise the sea may be safe, but he still has a spell for the voyager.



WINNIPEG: MAIN STREET FROM PORTAGE AVENUE.

WINNIPEG AND THE PRAIRIE.

READER, how do you picture Winnipeg? A frontier town with wooden sidewalks, an occasional broncho-buster riding down the one long street, inhabitants attired in wide sombreros and gay scarfs lounging in the stores, and the mayor, with his heels high above his head, consuming a cigar outside his office?

Suppose you have just dropped off the west-bound. You alight at the new Canadian Pacific Railway depot and find yourself in a station nearly as big as some of our London termini. There is a

waiting-room like a hall, with lofty pillars and floor space that makes you wonder who pays the rent, a wonderful suite of offices for the immigrant fills one side, and a palace of a hotel adjoins the station.

You come out on to Main Street. More surprises. The cement pavements are wide—wide as the whole of some London streets—and there are grassy boulevards and plenty of trees. But the width of the road probably strikes you first. Away out in the centre—far, far out—electric cars run, big, swift cars, close after one another, while each side is a roadway, honour bright, as wide as the Strand, and full of tradesmen's carts, waggons, drays, lorries and motor cars, down to the humbler buggies and democrats of the farmers and wheels of the cyclists. Towering buildings flank the street, shops where you can buy anything at all—indeed, some of the furs and diamonds would take considerable buying. A skyscraper or two improve the appearance of the city, though they dwarf the funny little shops on the opposite side of the street—shops mostly run by foreigners, relics of yesterday, when Winnipeg was only Fort Garry. Down Portage Avenue you find a mammoth block, the T. Eaton store. Here there are departments and floors and lifts to satisfy any New Yorker.

And so on you go out to the suburbs, and all the way you see men of every nationality, and shops with foreign names. Not as many tall hats and frock-coats as Threadneedle Street, perhaps, but more furs and brilliant costumes, and many more shirt-sleeves. And this is the Gateway of the West, and through it you pass and out on to the rolling prairie.

Probably, reader, you have been taught to imagine the prairies a tremendous sweep of flat land, with never a twig or molehill, but that is quite wrong. In the first place, most of it is rolling, not flat; something the contour of a calm summer sea with a long ground swell on. You occasionally pass pools and bushes, and many settlers have plantations and avenues of trees; on the whole, however, it is bare—it is prairie Canada. Farther north things are different. There the country is park-like—nothing else expresses it so well. Clumps of bushes and trees (“bluffs,” Johnny Canuck calls them), small woods, and where there is a river or lake, extensive forests make the countryside look more English. There are also hills and vales, streams and rivers, and though most settlers stake their all on grain and live in a house in the middle of a wheat-field, others go in for mixed farming, and in the lee of some bonny bluff build a cosy cabin, perchance overlooking a lakelet or stream, and raise cattle and chicken, vegetables and fruit, as well as ubiquitous King Wheat. The railway takes you through miles of such country, and if it is autumn the trees are flaming red and yellow, and glimpses of the Saskatchewan River idyllic.

The climate makes the colour, and nothing is more libelled than the Canadian climate. You believed it cold and changeful—a few bright intervals with days of dull grey, fierce winds and driving rain, the kind of thing one reads of off the Newfoundland fishing bank? Perhaps that is the Western climate of your imagination. But here is the reality. With March come the first chinooks,

and after five months of frost a warm wind makes the Westerner feel positively skittish. It is wonderful how fast the snow disappears when the chinooks and the sun "get going" together. What one day was a snowdrift two or three feet deep is a pool the next, and the day following, behold, dry earth! During April the great farming population is hustling as only Canadian farmers have to hustle, and the first frogs are singing in the sloughs, albeit the nights are sharp and sometimes the now universal streams and ponds are frozen almost solid. Still, the sun is playing winning trumps and pours heat on to the prairie, working longer each day in his enthusiasm. In May the first mosquitos sing their hateful song, and if the immigrant has had no pioneering yet, soon give him plenty. The days now are wondrous long, and an occasional hot spell brings the wheat along at forcing pace.

June is daylight's month. You can see the time by your watch at midnight, and the sun seems to rise almost where he set, which is pretty near due north. Now the prairie is gay with flowers. The most beautiful little wild roses grow by the acre. A mere twig, covered with richly-scented blossoms, red, white and striped. The scarlet lily, too, reddens many a rood, but more than all, the silver fox-willow flourishes, and it is a canon of land-seekers that where this willow grows wheat riots. Nature reckons by miles out West; only man estimates in acres; and so, as you drive hour after hour through the silver sea, the little yellow blossoms fill the air all the way with scent. During June there is usually a three-days' pelt, while showers and

warm, driving rains make vegetation spring like magic. July the sun has it all his own way. He gets up morning after morning swollen and red. The prairie is fresh to greet him, for the mercury always drops with the darkness, almost down to freezing-point. What else would manufacture No. 1 hard, and what else more refreshing for good sound sleep? But Father Sol will have none of it, and before long the heat waves are chasing each other across the hot earth and playing strange tricks with the distance. Where there should be nothing but a field of wheat, behold, wonderful mirages of lakes and trees, and on the horizon elevators twisted into towers, and houses like eastern mosques. Sometimes you see a whole town upside down in the sky, the original, perhaps, beyond the range of vision over the horizon. Miniature whirlwinds, too, stalk across the prairie, carrying columns of dust which look like genii out of the Arabian Nights. A blast smites you, then all is still and hot again; only a rushing sound over the grass and a column of dust running away from you.

In August look out for thunder-storms. Small and lazy, mere big electric clouds sailing across the prairie emitting low growls and an occasional bright flash, or huge and sudden, rushing out of the weird north and filling the air with gloom, the heavens with fire, and the earth with roaring. It is almost comic to see perhaps two of the smaller sort proceeding on their way at once, and all the while the sun shines on, heedless of their paltry mutterings and feeble flashes. The first frosts come in September and it is harvest, while October and often much of November is Indian summer, a fairy-land time,

when there are no winds, the prairie is yellow and the forest scarlet and gold, when the sun sends long, level rays and the distance is always purple. Towards the end of November it “freezes up,” and thence on Canada is most truly “My Lady of the Snows.”

SOME DELUSIONS.

WHAT funny ideas people run away with about Western Canada, despite all the pamphlets and all the lectures.

Do *you* picture a Saskatchewan town built of log houses, besieged by wolves in winter and overrun with cowboys in summer? These same cowboys bristling with six-shooters wherewith they "shoot-up" all the saloons—whatever in the world that may be.

Disperse these lurid visions and picture to yourself squares of plank buildings, placed at right angles, often on no other foundation than a few stout blocks resting on mother prairie. The shops have windows just like English shops, and if the streets are uneven it is only that the town has strayed on to an uneven piece of the plain. Perhaps things are so new there are no sidewalks, and the streets are yet green with virgin prairie; yet you may see a motor-car or two standing before the shops, and hear the latest popular song coming faintly from a gramophone inside somewhere. No; the romance here is gone. Where it lies is in the huge stretch of rolling prairie and the sweep of horizon all round, and the yet unfinished railroad, which means existence to the town.

Or do you picture Canadian winter a time when blizzard succeeds blizzard, and men crawl out of

snow huts, more like polar bears than men, spear a walrus, and get back quickly to the oil lamp and slumber?

Dismiss these imaginings. However far west a town, winter is a time of business and pleasure as pressing as a booming country can make it. Entertainments at night, the latest dramatic companies from the East, ice-hockey and other exciting sports fill all time not devoted to business, while people go out and about perhaps more than we do in our pelting climate. True, a three days' blizzard occasionally howls out of the north. Then the air is suffocating with snow as fine as dust, the streets unfamiliar with changing snowdrifts, the houses shaken by the roaring blast, and daylight twilight. Business necessarily is at a standstill; but none know the luxurious security of the fireside like those whose windows are darkened, not by fog, but whirling snow.

Then what is a Canadian like to you? Has he a waistband of scalps? Do pistols and howie-knives stick out of his clothes? Or is he more Dickensian with his hat ever on the back of his head and a habit of using expectoration for punctuation?

Nay; Johnny Canuck is now an exceedingly well-dressed, well-mannered and altogether alert young man of business. He wears an expensive suit and fur coat, but instead of a pipe or cigarette, smokes a cigar or chews something. The House of Lords would have short shrift with Johnny, for he greets everyone with frank equality, whether it is a hotel clerk or a visiting M.P.

And, lastly, what do you think a Canadian General Election consists of? Tammany bribing

right and left? Trust magnates intimidating the independent? Guns and fighting, firewater and orgies?

No; all these things are only in the brains of the unknowing. In a far western town the saloons are shut all polling day; men go quietly to vote; motor-cars, carriages and farm waggons, or in winter, sleighs, bring in outlying voters, and instead of waiting up all night in a cheering, groaning crowd, the Canadian reads the results next mail-day in his newspaper.

SPRING.

THE Scotch national prayer is said to be : " Lord gie us a good conceit of oursels." If that is so the Canadians have what the Scotch are praying for, and with it they blend a blatant optimism that is very catching.

The real estate agent does it from business; the settler from principle; the farmer (reversing all precedent) from habit; the investor from gratitude; and the man in the street because the air is " plumb-full " of ozone and hope, and he really cannot help himself.

In one sense it is one long springtime " Out West." And when the snow melts and Nature catches the infection, every farmer dreams of banner crops and every townsman of a boom in store.

Early frosts and mosquitoes, pioneering and difficulties are forgotten. Yet possibly they are blessings in disguise. Possibly they act like the " governor " on an engine. Possibly they keep the Westerner from being blown up by a combination of speculation and enthusiasm. Who knows?

But in the Canadian springtime even a professional pessimist would lynch Job, if he could get at him.

English summer and winter are so much alike. Yet even so March stirs the blood. Imagine four months of snow and frost. No brown earth. No

blade of grass. No running water. Then picture the first chinook. The first *spring* chinook. The sky banks up with purple blue clouds, bluer than any summer heaven; the snow glistens as it never does when dust cold, and the warm south-west wind whispers across the prairies and into the woodlands.

Then you wake up in the night and hear water trickling; a prickly feeling tingles through your veins; a wild elation mounts to your brain, and ten to one you throw open the window and absorb the spirit of spring, gazing lovingly at the stars—soft and misty now, instead of hard and frosty.

In the spring man's old primal instincts assert themselves. He loathes houses and walls. He wishes he were a hunter, or a farmer, or an explorer. Nature shouts to him to chase her "over the hills and far away."

And on a Canadian homestead the first rays of the March sun set everything rejoicing. The animals nose the moist steaming earth, where, in sheltered spots, it peeps shyly through the snow. The hens cackle deliriously, and the farmer hustles round getting ready for seeding. The very air is redolent of all kinds of springs smells which the frosty air never contained.

The days lengthen out, and the snow goes into ribs and honeycombs. The sun is red and insolent at seven in the morning. Water and pools appear. The ice on the creek breaks, and a brown torrent floods the flat. The last big snowdrift dwindles, and before it is gone the prairie crocuses are blooming.

For awhile, until the frost has all thawed out of the ground, the trees are barer than they were be-

rimed, but towards the middle of May, suddenly, in a night or two, they burst into leaf.

The geese have already gone north. You could hear them honking far overhead in the dusk of a warm evening. The frogs sing the livelong night, and the birds shout them down before it is light, and a man must have the waters of Lethe in his veins not to feel glad to live.

MISS PRAIRIE CANUCK.

ENGLISH folk imagine there are very few girls in Western Canada, and that those there are mostly cowgirls. The cinematograph does its level best to continue the illusion. The picture usually presents a beautiful Amazon, with her sleeves rolled up, a knife stuck in her waistband, and a gun slung across her shoulders, while she is engaged in tearing across the ranges in pursuit of cattle thieves or checkmating train robbers under heroic conditions. Also there are always plenty of brigands, bandits, and cowboys, the representation of the fair sex being left to one solitary damsel. Now, this may be romantic and thrilling, but it is scarcely just to so civilised a part of the world as Western Canada, and to so very fashionable a young lady as the Western Girl. Try to picture her.

If you have the luck to meet the Western Girl in a Western city or at a Prairie social you will find her "à la mode" to her finger tips, and the odds are that, instead of your criticising her, she will be very busy totting *you* up. For the Western Girl dresses on a colour scheme, and from the big, smart bows on the crown of her glossy head to the coloured shoes on her dainty feet she is chic through and through. She sniffs at English girls; "Forsooth," quoths she, "they are either dowdy,

frumpy, or their clothes are a distressing patch-work!" Fur boas are to her anathema, and rainbow effects unwhisperable.

She has a very good opinion of herself, though—almost as good as an exceedingly humble Scot.



And the Western Girl is capable. If she lives in the country, and wants to go to town, she catches, harnesses, and hitches up her pony herself, calls to pa, who is busy on the binder, and is off and away. Having done her shopping and paid her calls, she calmly drives home, be it light or dark, fair weather or foul, puts her horse back in the stable (unless one

of the boys is round, when it is done for her), and takes up her home duties once more.

She is her mother's right hand, and is treated more as a chum than a child, and she works hard. She can milk and knead and cook and mend like our great grandmothers are said to have been able to do. In busy periods she rises at unearthly hours, and does as much housework before breakfast as most girls do by bedtime. And in harvest and threshing-time she turns out endless meals with an appetising proficiency which is downright bewildering.

I hold no brief for Miss Prairie Canuck, and so I cannot gloss over her shortcomings. A distressing love of slang is one. If she does not like a thing she says "it is fierce." Instead of "How do you do?" she will inquire breezily, "Say, how d'you make out?" She is not easily frightened, though she may tell you she is "scared to death." If you look gloomy she will inquire if you are "up against it," and if the day is particularly fine she exclaims, "Isn't it a peach!" All too often—whisper it—she chews gum!

Again, the Western Girl has small reverence for anything in heaven or earth or in the waters under the earth. She calls her parents by their Christian names before her hair is up, men were created for her especial amusement, and she knows at least twice as much as you do about everything there is. Her critics say she has not the "solid" virtues of the English girl, but this is a foul aspersion. She has all the old English traits.

Remember, she is a very small minority, and the menkind spoil her. She gets taken to every meet-

ing, party, picnic, concert, and social within a radius of her home of twenty miles, and great is the competition to take her. She is flattered, and cajoled, and coaxed, and wheedled in a manner, to English eyes, quite scandalous. Is it small wonder then that she may not be so painfully retiring as is the "Effete East's" standard? Considering she reckons herself grown-up at 14 or 15, knows the world thoroughly at 20, and has a philosophy of the whole universe a year or two later, is it to be wondered at?

Men she treats with frank friendship—the ones she likes—or undisguised disgust—the rest.

And these are the ladies whom a touring English suffragette declared to be slaves. The Western Girl must have raised her pretty eyebrows when she heard of it, for she at least is a very tyrant of a slave.

THE "BOX SOCIAL."

It was held in the schoolhouse and began at eight o'clock. Long before that time, however, the road, which stretched east and west across the prairie straight as a die, had been getting busier and busier.

The sun was just setting, and the heat of the summer's day gave place to the delicious cold of the prairie night, while the calm of the evening gripped your heart.

No pen can ever describe the way the prairie grips your heart. *Miles* of sky on every hand, and *leagues* of space to the dusk-hidden horizon.

Faugh! your town-dweller's soul never expanded yet. He never drank in distance, real distance, once in all his cribbed, cabined, confined and artificial existence.

But to return to the Box Social. The settlers arrived; afoot, awheel, and aboard. "Lonely bachelors" walked or cycled or rode horseback. Other luckier dogs, who possessed the western prize beyond price, a sweetheart, drove her up in style and éclat. Settlers happy in the possession of wife and family, brought them along in the Sunday "democrat"; mother, the girls and baby, with the boys stuffed in anywhere they could be gotten.

By eight o'clock the trim little schoolhouse was packed, and the lamps shone on as happy, healthy

faces and as dainty decorations as anyone could wish, despite it being "ten miles from anywhere."

The audience would have done the biologist and the sociologist good to contemplate. The West had thrown some of its beauty into the girls' fair faces and their brothers' tall forms. Care failed to mark one father's face or cloud a single brow.

And what cosmopolitanism! an English girl sat next to an American, and beyond her a dusky French-Canadian beauty chatted to a Scotchman, and the lean, lank, eager, "downeaster" Canadian talked to the Cockney Brunette.

The auctioneer rose. You must understand a Box Social is a very serious business, and a professional auctioneer from the town ten miles away had driven out on purpose.

The boxes each contain a dainty meal—for two! The girls put them up and the young men buy them in, and the purchaser has to discuss the contents with the cook. The boxes are anonymous, but rumour says that pretty So-and-so made this one and saucy Some-one-else the other, and then the bids soar. The dividends, in this instance, swelled the coffers of the Union Sunday School.

"How much for this box?" said the town auctioneer, balancing the first daintily on the tips of his fingers. "Worth \$5 of any man's money. What did I hear? *One* dollar! Gentlemen, a \$5 box going for \$1. Going—" but he got no further. "Dollar fifty," shouted someone, and by half-dollars it went leaping up to \$5.50. There a young settler secured it; one who had half a section of land and quite a nice house—for a bachelor. If you had seen him afterwards explor-

ing the recesses of that box with the pretty Canadian who put it up, you would have felt the Union Sunday School might have had another \$5 down-right easy.

But now the fun waxed fast and furious.

Two dollars was the lowest any box fetched, and some soared up to \$10 and even \$15. Three pounds for a lunch for two! But girls were scarcer than dollars, you see.

A Box Social makes the girls blush and the young men gallant. It is the most exciting fun imaginable, and, say! how it rakes the money in!

The auction over, the entertainment began. Songs, recitations and readings, speeches, piano and violin. Ten miles from anywhere and what would you expect?

Well, they had the latest waltz from London, and the newest song from New York, and the funniest comic recitations and elocution and ventriloquism; and real talent peeped out so often it astonished you. Those young folk were out to enjoy themselves, and the fun-market was "bullish," so to speak.

Supper followed. The boxes were duly unpacked, and as every lady had brought a basket as well there was enough and to spare. Oh, those "layer-cakes!" They are American, quite American. Their variety is absolutely endless. The taste of each one more marvellous than the last, and there is nothing in all the world so nice as layer-cake, save only more layer-cake.

And after a supper of layer-cake and sandwiches and coffee, which only Canadian air can enable you to digest, and after the last box had been lingered

over, and nobody knows how many sweet nothings said across it, then, surely, everyone should have gone home and gone to bed?

Not a bit of it, however. Not even the ma's and pa's, who remain sweethearts out West after they are married. No. Everyone turned to and "in three agitations of a gopher's tail"—which is Canadian for "the twinkling of an eye"—the desks were bundled through all the windows at once on to the prairie, where they lay in sorrowful surprise gazing up at the great big Canadian stars; the floor was cleared; a couple of fiddlers took the platform; the schoolm'am presided at the piano as if she had never taught music anywhere near it; and

"There was a sound of revelry by night . . .

And all went merry as a marriage bell"

till the stars paled and the wind sighed across the prairie for another day's work, and reluctantly we turned homewards, the Box Social a thing of the past—till next time.

THE WOOD THIEVES.

HAVE you ever seen the midsummer sun rise over the prairie? He appears to get up due North, and after winking with one eye across the edge, jumps—there is no other word for it—into sight, red and sleepy; and no wonder, for it is barely four o'clock yet.

Two young Englishmen were well on their way when he greeted them thus one June morning. It behoved them to make an early start, for their steeds were oxen and their goal over the horizon. Besides, although the air was cool and the mosquitoes still asleep, Old Sol was soon going to change all that. So they belaboured their cattle and called them all those names which are in no dictionary, but which cattle love. It was growing hot when they reached the timber zone, and the cool shade of the trees was welcome. What a sight for plainsmen!

All around thousands of tall, straight trunks, losing themselves in dim aisles, where silver birch barks shone ghostly in the forest twilight. Great trees shot up straight and even for 80 or 100 feet, so thick together that they looked like the myriad columns of some monster dome. Wherever gale

or fire had torn a gash, saplings crowded each other in their eager endeavour to get a peep at the sky; and in the glade of a stream bright berries hung in the hot air, and canaries and butterflies flew from flower to flower, until the homesteaders thought they were in a lotus land, and gazed enchanted.

Shaking off the spell, they set to work, and nothing was heard for a time but the echoing "chop—chop—bang" every lumber-jack loves. According to bovine logic hitching-up time must have come again indecently soon. Homeward bound, hot, but triumphant, and the cool plain breeze smote upon the homesteader's cheeks as they emerged from wood land.

But suddenly there arose a shouting, and like one distraught, a furious old man rushed upon them. "Where d'you get that wood?" he bellowed. "You've stole it from my homestead! Confound your plainsmen's impudence! I'll have the mounted police on you, my lads. Now just put your loads off and give me your names!" and much more in the same vein. Yes, he could show them the boundaries of his place; and what if last year it was no man's ground? Settlers were pouring in fast enough to make people ask where they went chopping wood. Alas! beyond the shadow of a doubt they were trespassers. With the utmost eloquence they pleaded. They had no idea, no, not the faintest. They were poor, desolate, forlorn, unhappy homesteaders, miles from home. They brought forth all their cash, but it was very meagre, and only made the woodman snort. They would never come again, no, never. He snorted

all the more. To the North-West Mounted Police they should go and learn the *law-love* of their adopted land.

In the hour of their desperation a happy thought struck them. Might they stay and work out the value of their damage? The woodman jumped at that. In a country where muscle passes as coin of the realm *this* was talking sense, and so it came to pass they hitched their oxen to his plough, and while he disappeared below the hill with his horses, toiled among the stumps. No man or beast was within sight. The loads stood beckoning close to the road for home, and a great longing to flee seized them; when—

Behold! a very Amaryllis cantered into view, pulled her horse up deftly and addressed them with western frankness. It was supper time, and pa had sent her to show them to the house. Beyond surprise they followed her down the hill and to a cosy log building nestling among the trees. Never had the homesteaders had such sensations. Their captor glowered, but his pretty daughters regarded the boys with scarce-concealed amusement and feasted them loyally. A stifling night followed, and a hotter day. Hurling subdued epithets at their panting kine the homesteaders ploughed loyally, and if ever their true love Liberty beckoned, one or other of the girls, like a mounted patrol, happened along smiling and vigilant. Night came again, the short twilight night of the North-West, and one of the homesteaders lay full length along the ground and groaned. He became so rapidly "worse" that in the morning the

old woodman grew uneasy and reluctantly bade them begone, loads and all.

Possessed once more of freedom and the boundless prairie, the boys turned to take a farewell glance at their prison, and vowed softly to come again soon, steal more wood and get caught once more!

MOSQUITOES.

THE afternoon was very, very hot. The sun sizzled down out of a brazen heaven upon the prairies, a vast stretch of brown scorched grass that made the brain reel.

Across this unprotected waste a weary team of horses pulling a light Canadian "buckboard" followed a faint trail. The air around them was torn by furious and starving mosquitoes. Each horse was brown, yellow brown on flank and back and leg, the same brown, mark you, as the mosquitoes. Blood occasionally trickled where scores of tiny marks made a perceptible one, and when either tired beast swished its tail there was instantaneously a shrill falsetto scream from thousands of angry mosquitoes. The driver occasionally made savage slaps to right and left, but even he was weary from the war and longed for cool night and the fringe of trees on the far horizon and the thunderstorm that muttered in a blue cloud flat down on the eastern edge of the prairie behind him.

Mosquitoes bit through his clothes wherever a bending joint tightened them; mosquitoes bit through the eyelets of his boots and through his soft felt hat where the crown touched his head; mosquitoes walked in bands down his sleeves and out on to his unprotected hands, dying callously so they might but taste blood.

But at length the sun fell down towards the west,

and the storm spread across the sky and the trees were reached. Then behold our traveller enter a snug homestead, lead his faithful " Broncos " to a long, low sod stable, cool and untormented, while the last " skeeter " disappeared in the rising blasts and the storm burst, the wind roaring over the great stretch of wheat, every blade of which, as well as the snug frame house and cosy tea table, were the hardy homesteader's very own.

" Summer Sickness " the Westerner laughingly calls the mosquitoes, and as most Westerners are tough and wiry and acclimatized and have chewed tobacco till no self respecting fly will go near them, he can joke about it. But to the new arrival in the West those clouds of remorseless gnats are a nightmare horror no pamphlet ever troubled to mention.

A few adventurous mosquitoes greet him on the westbound train, and he feels for the first time the half sting, half itch of their welcome, followed by the even more maddening sequel, the shrill, angry buzz which succeeds his savage slap and—miss. Out on the prairies the mosquitoes often have it all their own way, but, luckily, only when conditions suit.

Still, warm days with rain about them like best, and thunderstorms make them more savage than anything else alive, and enough to drive men to madness.

The big farmer has some consolation because it is a prairie saying " More mosquitoes—more wheat "; the conditions which are favourable to the one being favourable to the other.

But the " Green Englishman " has nothing to console him, except he be an optimist when he will

observe that the mosquito hates wind, and makes himself scarce on windy days; that it is really only for about a month, usually June, that they are unbearable; and that they are worst in new districts and near water, so that as the country gets broken up they become rarer, and in towns are little or no trouble.

These things he will be duly grateful for and yet there are times when he wonders much what use in the "economy of nature" the mosquito fulfils. One "Green Englishman" wondered when on one occasion he wandered along the side of the Turtle Lake River searching for a ford to cross. The mosquitoes gathered thicker around him until pausing to listen for the rush of water over the ford he knew was near, he mistook the rush of myriad wings for the rattle of water over pebbles, and peered anxiously through his mosquito net dark with "skeeters."

On another occasion when cycling through a sandy district, wild and lonely, clouds of big yellow mosquitoes accompanied him, flying in a body overhead, only descending when he paused, and actually without any exaggeration casting a shadow, deep enough to be quite acceptable on that broiling summer afternoon if only something else had made it.

Again one wonders when outside work is stopped, as it will be two or three days every summer, what the gnat costs Canada as a country. For horses will not stand them, and oxen certainly cannot when they are "fierce." The only thing to do then is to unharness and light "smudges" (small smouldering fires) to the lea of which the

cattle stand, packing themselves gratefully in the smoke.

There is yet one other time, when the homesteader hates the mosquito more murderously and usually more helplessly than any other. It is when the day's work is over and he is sinking to sleep, a day in the open air making this a sensation, the deliciousness of which no town-dweller knows anything about.

But a solitary mosquito discovers him and hovers buzzing maddeningly about him. Then its shrill war-note is silent and he feels the sting-itch which banishes sleep quicker than anything else. If he is very wise and has a strong will, he lies still, bearing the torture, until the mosquito is thoroughly engrossed, then swiftly and suddenly he slays it. But ten to one that first sting makes him lunge furiously, blindly, uselessly, and his reward is the shrill angry buzz and the process repeated over again.

So much for one of the little drawbacks of pioneering. The Canadian mosquito does not carry malaria, it only tortures new comers and it is troublesome only for short periods. For all that it is but fair that people should know at least a little about him.

BIRTH OF A WESTERN TOWN.

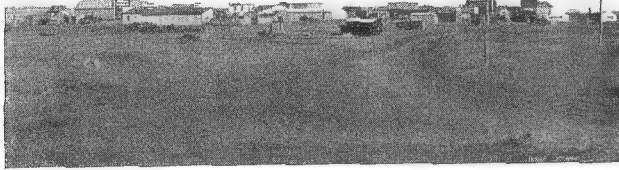
FOUR months old. The little village of Wilkie lay in the still sunshine like a mirage—yellow-brown prairie to the horizon, east, west, north, and south. So clear was the autumn air that from a distance it looked like a cluster of dolls' houses, diminutive, but absolutely clear cut. The village consisted of some sixty buildings, where, four months before, only three houses stood, and, the preceding summer, nothing but a wheatfield.

A bank, a church, two hotels, lumber yards, restaurants, shops, and a few dwelling-houses, unpainted plank buildings set methodically in right-angled rows. There was nothing but an occasional stretch of stubble and what looked like a raised earthen road to explain the phenomenon.

Somewhere "down east" a great railway company planned an extension, then the surveyors' tents went west, soon the grade followed, and Wilkie, with a score of other towns, sprang into being, while far and wide over the once lonely prairie settlers' houses appeared. On this calm autumn day Wilkie was humming with activity. Many of the houses were yet unfinished, and the owners were hard at work. The editor of *The Press*, for instance, was busy in his shirt-sleeves finishing off the floor of the office, while the sub-editor "slung

type" for the second edition of the first number as if his life depended on it.

Presently the editor straightened his back. "Me lud," he exclaimed cheerily, "last and final call for supper." And the two repaired to the biggest hotel and feasted sumptuously from a menu fit for London. The steel for the railway was expected within a month. But those were real pioneer days, my masters. *There being few houses*, people slept in their offices, and all discomforts were forgotten



BIRTH OF A WESTERN TOWN.

in the almost picnic spirit with which Wilkie was founded. Everybody knew everybody else, and were they not making history? It was such fun to walk round in the evening and see how the town *had grown during the day!* Real estate doubled in value in a few months; the town was to be a railway divisional point, a manufacturing city, a second Winnipeg.

There was no busier spot than *The Press* office. Being "The Medium of Publicity in One Hundred Townships"—each township 64 miles square,

mark you!—the machine ran literally day and night. It was a common thing then to work till midnight Saturday, when the sub-editor, having religious scruples, knocked off, and went to bed in the publishing department. The editor worked into the wee, small hours, then he too retired to slumber amongst the type, and quiet reigned in the little one-roomed printing house. Next day, towards noon, sub-editor awoke, and, after starting the heater, repeated the German alphabet backwards and forwards, clearly and distinctly, several times. This never failed to rouse the editor; but it was the only thing ever known to.

Then there was a rush to get up to the hotel before dinner was over. Here everybody met—the village doctor and the village lawyer, the store keepers and their assistants—for nobody had had time to think of building homes yet, and pioneer democracy held undisputed sway. And so autumn approached winter, and still the railway grade lacked steel. Then one memorable day smoke appeared above the horizon. Day by day it crept nearer, until, amid universal flag-flying, gun-firing and rejoicing, the track layer, with its huge gang of hustlers, reached town. Linked with the outside world and rich in a train one way every other day, Wilkie lay snugly and defied the snow-drifts.

Now it is incorporated a real town, and has a Mayor and Corporation, and daily through expresses to Edmonton and Winnipeg. *The Press* would scarcely know its former self, and yet few of the citizens can have forgotten the day of small things, so few brief years ago.

THE WESTERN HUSTLE.

IMAGINE, if you please, a small river winding through undulating prairie in a *certain district* in Western Saskatchewan. Here for years in winter the blizzards howled unchecked, in summer the



MOVING A SHOP ENTIRE.

thunderstorms growled over a prairie utterly untenanted—deserted, save for one *little oasis* of human activity where for some distance on either side of the river snug homesteads nestled. It was here after the Riel rebellion of the '80's many of the

Canadian Militia settled, and other hardy pioneers joined them. They found the land good. They reaped crop after crop of wheat. They merely scratched the surface too.

In summer the long, hot days were almost tropical, humming birds and canaries flitted along the river banks, and bull frogs sang through the brief, twilight night. In the fall the sun shone through blue and purple mists and from dusk the northern lights flickered till dawn. Winter time occasional blizzards howled out of the weird north, filling the air with snowdust and making twilight of mid-day. More often, though, Sol smiled brightly for weeks on end—a clear globe of silver sparkling on a world of white, where nothing stirred.

One autumn the Canadian Pacific Railway built a line into the district and the following is the account of the town that at once sprang up. Romance all gone? Not a bit of it, only the variety changed a little.

The Union Bank opened an office at a farm house one mile from the present town, about three months before the railway was laid—also built bank building there. A hardware store was also opened in a tent near the bank. Then the steel arrived, the town was surveyed and “things began to hustle.” The bank building was pulled bodily into town by a steam engine about the middle of November—everybody concerned nearly frozen to death. Hardware store followed in a few days and put up a shanty. Next came a country store from about one mile distant which travelled to town on skids.

About this time there was terrible grubbing about

in the snow to find survey stakes ; several people, indeed, found themselves on the wrong lot when the snow melted in the spring, but that was soon remedied as no very big buildings were put up until the following summer. A decidedly rough and ready restaurant, a livery barn and lumber yard were the next to come in. Then followed another country store pulled in by the same old reliable steam tractor, from about six miles distant. Next trip the steamer pulled in a farm house, property of the man who owned the livery barn. A couple of " machine sheds " (agricultural machinery for sale) and a blacksmith's shop then made their appearance, and a pool room was built. An enterprising Chinaman then came along and started a laundry to " makee washee washee " and before the winter was out a couple of real estate offices, a hotel, butcher shop, two more machine sheds, shoemaker, barber and feed-mill were established. Board of Trade organized during the winter and boomed the " town " with true western energy.

The first " little stranger " made his appearance during the first winter, too ; but, unfortunately, did not stay long, and the town gravely started a cemetery.

With the spring everybody began setting things in order. The stores were rebuilt or enlarged out of recognition. Some half dozen residences went up—another livery barn was built, and of course the citizens had to organize a baseball club and a " fete," with horse races and " football tournaments," etc., etc., and as a prominent citizen put it, " There was a deuce of a time."

During the summer the citizens laid sidewalks.

With the assistance of a couple of carpenters they all turned out and laid these sidewalks, butcher, baker, candlestick-maker, banker, Royal North West Mounted Police, Chinaman and all. They also put up a Town Hall for dances, concerts, etc., on the same plan—everyone “pounded spikes” for about a week and, hey presto! the Town Hall was built.

The village was next incorporated and an Agricultural Society formed. The station was completed, and three grain elevators grew up like mushrooms almost in a night.

With the fall, too, several more residences went up, and the faithful steam engine brought in more additions from the country, in the way of country houses, whose owners had started business in town. Winter passed off quietly as is usual on the prairie, the farmers having little to do beyond haul their grain and “take in” the dances, entertainments, etc., at the town hall. Some of the citizens even added Cooncan to their accomplishments.

The shipments of grain from the district last fall were about 250,000 bushels, principally wheat, worth (at 2s. 6d. per bushel) £30,000. Of course the district has been settled longer than most parts of Canada, and is correspondingly cultivated and prosperous. Corner town lots which sold at first for \$200 now change hands at \$350.

Perhaps it is hardly fair to give the name. The people do not want speculators, buying up their town and yet for verity's sake, it must be given. Look, then, on a modern map of Saskatchewan, follow the C.P.R. North West from Saskatoon till you come to Wilkie, a divisional point. From here

a branch line, thirty-two miles long, lands you in Cut Knife, this latest "hustle town" out West.

The name, by the way, is derived from a hill visible from the town, where the Indians under chief Cut Knife made their last stand against the English soldiers, in the famous half breed rebellion so long ago.

JOHNNY CANUCK.

UNTIL you visit Western Canada you cannot appreciate Johnny Canuck. Johnny is essentially a dweller in the open-air. Eighty-seven per cent. of him is farmer so to speak. His complexion is tanned and swarthy red, his jaw is lean and lantern, his eye deep-set, clear and bodeful. His teeth are well reinforced, with gold prominently placed; and his hair is thick, black and long, especially behind where it hangs gently against his well-shaved neck, à la Laurier. His energy is tremendous, but he affects it not, though a deliberate and eternal chewing is often index. This is Johnny on the farm. Independent? The essence! but a good fellow under an affectedly rough exterior. When John becomes a town dweller, he believes, like his sister, in the best clothes. The very swellest will he wear, and the most expensive cigars. His manner now is the man of affairs, and commercial slang his soul delights in, as witness his advertisements in any Western paper. Presently John gets on. He worships work and he adores dollars. His meals, as even on the farm, are tossed down, and one would little guess the penalty he's paying as, with feet high on the hotel stove-top, he affects supreme

indifference, chewing a tooth-peck. John epitomises the West. He swaggers not a little; he won't be taught to do any mortal thing, because he knows how already; he has an amusingly British contempt for foreigners, "Chinks" and



A PICNIC PARTY.

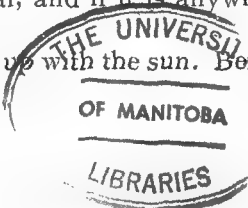
"Dagoes"; his language doesn't always harmonise with his fur coat and diamond ring; but his heart is warm, his confidence great, his brain clear and keen, and his determination to hustle success his way boundless as the prairies themselves.

SUNDAY WITH A MISSIONARY.

STRENUOUS but inspiring is the life of a pioneer curate-in-charge of a prairie circuit or parish in the far North-West. Nowhere is good work better appreciated; nowhere has an earnest man greater influence or more scope. No grinding poverty, no crystallised indifference, no frenzied society to combat. Everywhere an open mind, while youth and enthusiasm breathe in the air. Materialism is the chiefest hindrance, but materialism born of success and energy can be turned into religion by the right man. The whole thing depends on the man, the missionary, the curate-in-charge. If he is but in earnest he is welcomed passionately. In the hundreds of new districts springing into life across far-flung Saskatchewan they want him. A poorly-attended service is unknown. And what congregations! Young people—young and hopeful and enthusiastic.

During the week the missionary studies and visits and organises and writes according to the kind of man he is. To see all his parishioners he has to drive his broncho and buggy for miles, or ride his tough mustang for half an afternoon. Out on the prairies the lonely homesteaders welcome him with joy. He is pressed to stay for a meal, and if it is anywhere near nightfall, the night.

At home on Sunday he is up with the sun. Before



breakfast he feeds his horse, and gets everything ready for the drive. In democratic Western Canada everybody does everything for himself. After breakfast, and a change into clericals, he is off, almost before the prairie town has blinked into wakefulness. Flowers edge the trail, and prairie dogs play in the warm sunshine. Meadow larks sing uncertainly, as if half afraid of the great silence



A TYPICAL PRAIRIE CHURCH.

(Such as the Archbishops' Western Canada Fund is helping to build.)

on the sun-lit plains; if ever Sunday was a day of peace, it is on the prairies on a summer morning.

His first stop is at an even newer, younger town than the one which by now has dropped out of sight behind, under the curve of the horizon. Houses are in all stages of construction, furniture and merchandise litter the grass streets, while the railway grade, with its new metals which have so recently been spiked down, makes a pleasant rendezvous for picturesquely clad "citizens."

The little church has been opened though, and presently the bronzed settlers file in. A precocious American girl presides at the organ, reaching down to touch the pedals, and soon the grand old music floats out on the still warm air. Nowhere in all the world does the church service appeal to a man like it does when, thousands of miles from England, he bows and worships in the overwhelming immensity of "the last, best West."

The service over, the curate-in-charge has a hasty dinner in a wealthy Iowa merchant's house—*i.e.*, in the one room which is finished. Then he is off again. This time willing hands help him to "hitch-up." He has a round of handshakes, and even a gruff "God bless you" follows him as he drives off again. The curate-in-charge is out on to the "illimitable veldt" once more.

Another eight or ten miles and he pulls up before a long, low log-house. The last few miles he has threaded his way through scrub and bluff, over creeks and round sloughs, for it is more broken country here, though wonderfully like English park land in places. The air is hot and heavy with perfume, canaries and other bright birds hover over the flowers and bushes, and (to his ears) unfamiliar notes and calls sound from the depths of the copses. This is "scrub-land." Less profitable than the bare prairie for wheat growing, but far more profitable for mixed farming.

The log-house is crowded, and the settlers startle the sleepy summer afternoon with the heartiness of their singing. This second service over, and a cup of tea, hastily swallowed, the curate-in-charge is off once more.

Out on the prairie again, and as the sun is westering he nears his home town once more. The evening service here is the event of the day. The little church stands for so much in those hustling western towns, and it is crowded. The bells are ringing from the pretty wooden steeple, and the churchyard is crowded with the buggies and horses of the congregation. The order of evening prayer is neither mechanical nor long to these people living so near nature, and they drink in the earnest exhortations of the tired young curate-in-charge.

Such is his Sunday in summer. In winter a sleighs supplants the buggy and snow-tracks the trail. Usually the air is still and the sun bright, and wrapped in furs he hardly feels the frost, but occasionally a blizzard roars out of the north unexpectedly, and then if he is on the trail only his Master's business can give him hope.

MARRIAGE EXTRAORDINARY.

THE following incident is true; it all happened within the space of a few hours. If when you have read, you still doubt, "Go West, young man, go West" and hear them talk about "the Baby Crop" for yourself, for they soon lose count of units in those western towns. If you can't stop to make the trip just at present, read the marriage columns of the Winnipeg *Free Press* and gibe no more.

It was in a little Albertan town where, having concluded business for the day, I went to call on an old friend. That he lived in the manse and was the Methodist pastor only adds weight to my words. He was out, detained as a matter of fact, by the electric tram which had run off the line down town; but he telephoned that I was on no account to leave before he returned. So I sat in his cosy drawing-room listening idly to the hum of the bees on the rose-covered wall outside. Suddenly the front-door bell rang violently, and the next moment a tall, lank rancher walked in and sat down cautiously on a dainty chair. The servant withdrew, casting apprehensive backward glances as she heard the chair creak.

That rancher interested me at once. He was in his "glad rags" (which, as you know, is Western for best clothes), and he was so agitated I felt real sorry for him. He twisted and turned, fidgeted

and fumed, twirled his hat and shuffled his feet; indeed, as the moments flew and no pastor came his state grew pitiable. At last he broke the silence.

"Will you—will you," he exclaimed, the perspiration standing in beads on his brow, "*will* you be witness?"

For a moment I thought of flight. The day was hot, even ranchers go mad occasionally; but the man was between me and the door, and sat gazing with fearful earnestness. Escape was evidently impossible.

"With the greatest of pleasure," I said, faintly. A huge load seemed to roll off his breast.

"Guess I'll git, then," and without another word he "got," disappearing in the glare outside. Once more I was left alone, but presently a light, brisk step sounded in the hall, and the next moment I was gripping the hand of the pastor and being introduced to his Canadian wife.

"Ha! ha! ha!" he laughed when he had heard my story. "Dressed in his best; meeting the west-bound; wants you as a witness. Get the prayer-book, my dear, will you?" And while his wife was gone he confirmed my suspicions—chuckling the while, as he thought of my introduction to the ways of the West.

Then the bell rang again, and again the tall rancher was ushered in. Now, however, he had someone else to think about beside himself, for clinging to his arm was as bonny an English lassie as ever refreshed the eyes of far Westerners. Despite her six-thousand mile journey, she looked fresh and blushing as a May morning in the Old Country. There was no useless waste of time.

The train left again in fifteen minutes, and after spanning the globe, "Wilt thou have this man?" seemed almost an insult to the girl. Between the congratulations I managed to apologise for having no old shoe.

"The notice was a bit brief," said the rancher with a happy sigh. "Calculate we owe some explanations, too," he said; but I cut him short. A few hours later in a town a little further on a commission from the pastor of the last to the pastor of this other town landed me once more at the manse. Being no mean city, and this the pastor of the First Methodist Church, I observed him with respect, but we had not exchanged two words when the bell rang. An uncanny feeling filled me, for I heard young people speaking. It is wonderful how small a clue leads to so great conclusions, but so it was when I set eyes on these young folk—four of them, an you please—I read their intentions in their looks. "Excuse me a moment," said the pastor, showing them into another room; "they won't detain me long." And they didn't. "I have over a hundred such weddings each year," he laughed when he returned, "although a double one is rarer. Manse marriages relieve the rush, you see." I saw and I believed.

FIRE!

THE old geography books described the North-West of Canada as a "frozen, treeless waste"; but then the old geographers never visited the Riding Mountains in Mid-Manitoba. One blazing day in the height of summer quite a dozen settlers' waggons wended their way up the gentle slopes of the mountains, and at every step penetrated deeper into primeval forest. Now and then, where a swamp or lake broke the army of trees, they saw behind them sweet glimpses of the valley they had left. It lay like a picture; dotted with homesteads, strewn with clumps of trees and watered by little streams—"cricks," or creeks, they called them. Presently the tortuous trail dipped, and the horses trotted downwards, dodging the stumps with native skill, swinging round curves, almost scraping the trees on either side, while the bronzed settlers shouted and joked, especially if one of them bumped over a log and made the chips fly. The "joie-de-vivre" coursed through their veins, so why shouldn't they shout? Their crops grew seven days a week, night and day, and were making dollars for them back there in the valley now. Care in the shape of grasping landlords they knew not, while Mrs. Grundy never *could* withstand the breezes of the Tamarisk plains. Handsome fellows they were, in their wide

sombreros. The West had thrown some of her magic into their lithe carriage, and the free, open-air life had moulded their muscles beyond the art of gymnasiums.

And now the trail suddenly debouched into the open, and of all sweet places a clearing in the Canadian bush is peer. To begin with, it is scented like a thousand flower gardens. This is the forest's apology for lack of wild-flowers. Spruce and birch, fir and poplar, as they fall before the axe, load the air with the most exquisite perfumes, until with closed eyes you might imagine yourself among beds of roses. Then you have no idea how secluded and cosy a place it is. Until you burst in you hear no sound, nor have the least inkling of its presence. Once there, the noise and echoes are magnified as in some vast room, the birds and butterflies seem as relieved as you are, to have won free of the trees, and bright sunshine banishes the forest gloom.

All was bustle, rush, and activity where the settlers found themselves. The clearing was on a little plateau, round one side of which a creek meandered as if loth to lose sight of the sky and plunge again into the tangled ocean surging so greedily all round. Beside the creek half a dozen low log cabins nestled with their backs against huge trees. In the middle of the plateau a small saw-mill was working with furious activity, utterly out of keeping with the sleepy, scented air and motionless eternal forests. The engine panted, the saw screamed, ripping its way through great logs, while several rough figures slaved attendance. Then the arrival of the newcomers slackened operations for a

moment. The logs they had hauled in winter stood in piles near by, and these were now pulled to the machine to be sawn into planks. Each settler helped his fellow with the utmost good will, and as the sun climbed up over the trees to look wonderingly in on the scene loads of lumber began to take the place of empty wagons. There was one person, the "chore-boy," who was earning his \$1.50 a day nobly. His duty it was to stand ever alert, pail in hand, and where a spark from the engine alighted, promptly douche it with water. An extra big log always meant extra activity for him, as the engine panted with wrathful vehemence, and the sparks which shot into the air resulted in thin spirals of smoke wherever they fell. The grass and brushwood were as dry as tinder, but the settlers joked and shouted and called for him to put out smouldering in three or four different places at once. They were used to danger; besides, there was no wind, and in still air fire lacks life.

Then the whistle sounded for dinner, and everyone retired to the cool huts and feasted like the heroes of Asgard. As they smoked their pipes they noticed how wondrous still it was. The heat waves danced in the clearing, and the tree stumps shimmered as if they stood under water. Near at hand gaudy grasshoppers spun clicking through the air, but in the depths of the forest strange birds called faintly to each other, and even the raucous song of the bull-frogs was sleepy and subdued. Despite the wooing of indolence, however, the men sprang to work again, and so fast and furious was the pace none had time to notice a huge bank of blue cloud,

muttering and rumbling, which began to heave itself over the tree-tops. None marked it until, spreading, it darkened the sun. "Storm coming, boys," sang out the engineer cheerily from his post of comparative idleness, and a louder growl answered him. Then the wind sprang up, and before they knew it a fiery serpent was hissing through the grass.

With one accord they rushed to the creek, snatching sacks or anything that came handy as they ran. Back across the clearing, their dripping weapons in their hands, and they fell on the red tongues of flame. Thud, thud, thud went the sacks, a swinging double blow, answered by the hiss of quenched fire. Some guarded the horses, others fetched fresh sacks and resoaked the old ones, and the remainder fought for their lives. Every minute the wind increased until it was roaring through the trees, the fire roaring back to it. Struggling like demons, scorched, choked, staggering, inch by inch they were beaten back towards the creek. The sparks began to fly past them, and for one flame that died a score burst into life. Their clothes took fire, their skin blistered, the sacks dried and burnt in their grasp, and the uneven battle seemed almost over when the rain began to fall—in single big drops at first, but swiftly increasing in volume until solid sheets of water came hurtling down, ready to rival the fury below. Gratefully the men paused, leaned panting, and listened to the hiss of dying fire. It was a warring of the elements as fierce in its intensity as any human battlefield, and gradually the water won. Dense clouds of steam and

smoke took the place of the flames; then this subsided until only the drip and rush of raindrops and roaring of the wind was heard. The settlers sawed no more that day. Of all desperate, exhausting effort fighting a bush fire is supreme, and so they drove their loads homeward to the valley, thankful, but utterly spent.

COMPARISONS.

COMPARISONS are extremely and intensely interesting, and only odious just as far as they are good for you.

If, therefore, a British farmer should read what follows, he has consolation whichever way he looks at it; for either it is not odious, or else it is doing him good.

He moves—and he must know it—with great deliberation; he dresses quaintly and with doubt of what is correct; he detests changes of any kind; he dotes on routine and moves along in a rut. There *are* hustling farmers, more especially in Yorkshire, but if you go into a country town on a market day you can tell the deliberate farmer from everyone else immediately, and you know that the next agricultural improvement will meet with its bitterest opposition at his hands. If you are searching for talent and enterprise you do not go to the countryside, for its own best sons and daughters are already in the town, the rustic population having failed to stimulate them.

All this is reversed on the prairies of Western Canada. A district is settled, and the farmers to a man are homesteaders. They can, therefore, stop for nothing until the first crop is in, and the breaking season over; then they call a meeting, and form themselves into a Local Improvement Dis-

trict; they build a schoolhouse, taking good care to draw all Government grants due for it; they organise a farmers' society, and they arrange an annual ploughing match. If no railway has announced its intention of coming their way they send a deputation to one of the big companies, and if that fails, to the Government at Ottawa.



REAPING IN WESTERN CANADA.

One district sent a deputation each summer for three or four years, and repeatedly wrote to every railway company in Canada. Needless to say, they now have their railway, and will in all probability soon see a second coming their way.

Something in the air seems to make a Western farmer in a hurry to get on; and then, too, he is an

"enterpriser," or he would still be in some "old country" hoeing turnips with the rent hanging over his head. He has a tremendous pull over his British compeer in growing up with the country, and not being born into an inimitable but custom-bound, clique-ridden little island.

But in nothing is the difference so apparent as in dress and bearing. "Out West" the farmer is an autocrat — sometimes a plutocrat — the young farmers are the "bloods," and even the townspeople affect farmer salutations and farmer fashions. On Sunday or at a social, or when they drive in to town to "take in" a dance, the farmers yield to none in their appointments. They have the catalogues of the big mail-order houses in Winnipeg and the East sent them, and they are dressed "down to the minute" and fashionable in the extreme.

"Homesteader" is a term which covers a large and varied class. Members of the British nobility have homesteaded before now, so that it is not surprising to find more talent in the country than in the town. In one Western village the homesteaders used to gather every week and give the townspeople a concert. They recited and sang, aye, and acted good drama, and they did it for months once a week out of sheer overflow of musical talent.

And yet these same homesteaders are hard-headed farmers who never farm less than 160 acres apiece, who would laugh at the idea of ploughing less than two acres a day, and who often count their wheat crops by the thousand bushels. And the secret of this lies in their eager acceptance of the

latest machinery and the newest labour-saving appliances.

Probably nowhere in the world can you see more beautifully adapted machinery than is at work from spring to fall in prairie Canada. The farmers start in March with a 24- or 26-drill disc-seeder sowing chemically-treated seed: "blue-stoned" wheat or "formalined" oats. They follow up with a six-section harrow as broad as an English turnpike road. They leave the grain then. If it cannot weed itself they do not reckon it worth weeding, but it nearly always weeds itself. Meanwhile the homesteader is ploughing his summer fallow. He puts four or five horses on a double-furrow gang riding plough (he calls a single plough a "sulky"), worked by levers from a centre seat with rods projecting in front of the mould-boards. These rods are necessary to pull the growth under, for in its few months' existence summer fallow grows its own crop—wild roses, pea vine, veitches, evening primroses, etc., etc. When harvest comes, six, seven or eight foot binders cut the grain, and they are the latest pattern binders, tying and carrying the sheaves and dropping them at exact distances in just the right quantities to make a shock. Next, the threshing machine comes around. It is pulled by an engine and driven by the same engine, and a wind-blower stacks the loose straw while the wheat rattles down a self-bagger, and the homesteader merely ties the top of the bag and shifts it to the end of his waggon. If he thinks the market justifies it—and he is a keen student of prices—he drives straight away to the elevator. Here his load is weighed on a movable table and then tipped, so

that he merely slips the string off the mouth of the bag and holds the end, while his grain shoots down into a vast bin to be elevated with many other thousand bushels, mixed and blended, to the top of the elevator. A gasoline engine drives the elevator and the railway runs outside.

So the Western farmer is quite a scientist, and if you went into a Western school you would find his children learning out of a standard book on scientific farming.

And the homesteader's wife and daughters differ from English "country cousins," too.

The farmer's wife in England comes to town for her amusements and shopping, and observes with due reverence the haughty city dames dressed in the latest city fashions; and does not like to talk too much lest her dialect betray her; and looks about with diffidence and dread lest the motor-cars or trams slay her, or the city sharpers fleece her.

Not so Mrs. Homesteader. She belongs to some "ladies' aid" or "social club," bigger and better than anything they have in the Western town; she shops direct with a mail-order house, and so keeps more fashionable than the town ladies; she drives to town in a smart turnout, and comprises the major part of the rush and bustle herself, and, unless she is very recently from an English country district, has forgotten her sleepy dialect and talks crisp Western idiom.

The methods and manner of the country make the people. A homesteader with 320 acres ploughs a furrow two miles long, and once to and fro turns over an acre of soil. He has no time nor labour to waste turning and doubling, and hedges and gates

never caused him inconvenience yet. Instead of having different crops, different years in different fields, he moves the fields about by taking down and putting up fences. Instead of hauling grain to a distant granary he dismantles the granary and moves it over to the wheat. He insures his crop under a Government policy, he shops by mail, and pays calls by telephone. When he can afford it he ploughs by steam and travels by petrol, has phonograph concerts, and is as scientific and mechanical as the most up-to-date business man in England.

Here is an instance of the kind of joke that appeals to him. Would it amuse Hodge's master, think you? It is from the latest number of a prairie paper.

"So you want to marry my daughter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Got any money saved up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Could you let me have \$5,000 on my note of hand?"

"I could, but I wouldn't."

"I guess you can take care of her all right. She's yours, my boy, and here's a five cent. cigar!"

THE KING: A WESTERN VIEW.

NOTHING amuses the Canadian more than to read the solemn discussions in English newspapers about his loyalty. Why, bless you, the average Westerner has a streak of it in him that would make most Englishmen blush. For the meaning of devotion to Crown and Empire you want to traverse the Last Best West, and when you reach the Pacific you must acknowledge you knew nothing about it on the Atlantic.

You may go sight-seeing in Montreal, where the chief sights are banks and churches—criteria both of success, though of different kinds; you may stop off for a day's shooting in that marvellous labyrinth of lakes and rivers and trees called New Ontario; you may roll across the never-ending wheatfields of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, visit the northern lumber camps, converse with the river drivers, penetrate high up among the Rockies, where the scenery has Switzerland counted right out, and drop in on any little mining town to peruse its very twentieth century newspaper; finally you come to the cities of the Pacific, in the free libraries of which you find *Punch*, the *Illustrated London News*, and other old friends—and everywhere it is "God save *our* King." But when any event touches the person of His Majesty the real loyalty of the Westerner stands revealed, for nothing else

is of such absorbing interest to them. True, they have some queer ideas about lords and dukes—people who wear monocles and coronets and oppress the poor—but the King, God bless him! is above all that; a wise, good, far-seeing and all powerful father, who watches his Colonies with kindly eye, rejoicing in their prosperity, and to whom the Blackfoot Indian and the Montreal millionaire may appeal alike.

Canadians born may pretend occasionally to despise Englishmen, but in the bottom of their hearts they have a deep admiration for the tough little island that leads the world, and a very real love for the man who symbolises its majesty, while often and often you come across whole families who have Anglomania—not always mildly, either. Suppose you are there for Sunday tea. Your host is a true Easterner, and has prospered since he reached the West. The room you are sitting in shows that. Around him is his family, the Misses Joanna Canuck embarrassingly interested in you, while the rest of the party ask you to describe the Strand, the Houses of Parliament, and the Old Country piecemeal. Wait a bit, though. For, first of all, before you are fairly seated, they want to know if you have seen the King; and if so, happy art thou if thou mayest describe him even to the veriest detail of His Majesty's raiment; and if thou art not put to shame by the unaffected loyalty of these fellow-subjects, right loyal wert thou already.

So much for Canadians born. How about Americans? As a rule they rather like the idea of a new kind of President, reports to the contrary notwithstanding, and when they find they are abso-

lutely as free as they were under the Stars and Stripes, while law and order are pleasantly prominent, the vast majority become as aggressively loyal to the King as they were before enthusiastic for the President. A true incident illustrates this.

It was the annual concert at the Narrow Lake schoolhouse—if you have an up-to-date map of Central Saskatchewan you will see Narrow Lake, as bold as print can make it, away north-west of Saskatoon—and the company was singing “God Save the King” at the end with a swing that made the rafters ring. There were two American families, however, who had newly come to the country, and they insisted on singing “God Save McKinley.” For this the settlement (made up of about equal proportions of Americans, Canadians and Englishmen) socially ostracised them until they were very sorry and erred no more.

With regard to the Englishman, distance lends enchantment, and the little island back across the seas, with all that therein is, becomes something sacred to him. He marvels how his thoughts of loyalty and patriotism were not warmer before, and, with the other people of the Great Plains, throws a world of earnestness into his voice when he sings:

“Send him victorious, happy and glorious,
Long to reign over us,
God save the King.”

AN ELECTION IN THE FAR WEST.

THE member for our constituency was a French-Canadian, a wealthy ranch owner and real-estate man. His writing and speaking were always reduced to a minimum, but he was successful, notwithstanding, and had a long parliamentary career behind him. The constituency lay some six hundred miles north-west of Winnipeg. South it went out on to the prairie for I don't like to say how many miles, and on the other side it stretched apparently to the north pole. The canvassing would have daunted anything English but a suffragette, and forty miles from one meeting to another was not uncommon.

In the heart of the south country there was a six months old town, and in the middle of the town a three weeks old newspaper office. The editor's desk faced the front door, which was usually wide open, so if anything important happened on the street it went into the paper, and there was no escaping it.

One day, towards the end of October, when the prairie began to look gaunt and the sun to fight a losing battle with the cold, a smart buggy and pair stopped outside *The Press* office, and three gentlemen entered. One was the member seeking re-election. He was tall and swarthy, and, despite his rich fur coat and diamond pin, you could almost be-

lieve report which hinted at Indian blood in his veins. He had never addressed the House on any subject, and his opponent called him "the silent member"; but his supporters declared actions speak louder than words, and they shouted it very loud and very often at election times. Certainly, his constituency was well looked after. If they wanted a bridge across the Saskatchewan they had it, and Ottawa was never allowed to forget them for very long.

The member was canvassing to-day. With him was the village lawyer, blind in one eye, like her of ancient legal fame, and the village doctor, president of the local association. These three gentlemen then fell upon the editor with great eloquence, force, and persuasion, but that wily man, with every token of goodwill, committed himself to nobody. And now the press ran day and night, and flaring posters adorned the village, while mass meetings were held, and the farmers came into town to sell their grain and remained to talk politics till their wives at home wondered what had become of them.

At *The Press* office history repeated itself, for the Opposition dropped in and left behind *their* bunch of rush orders.

"Dash and no Graft." "Blank and the Hudson's Bay Railway." "Dash and Prosperity and Governments Elevators." And both together: "Electors, the Eyes of the West and the World are upon You!" So the chorus swelled, till at length the great day arrived. The hotel bars were shut down tight, and the Royal North-West Mounted Police sat on the lid, so to speak. The polling booth was a real estate agent's shack, and

here the majesty and simplicity of the law held sway. There were few or no objections, no lodgers struck off, no latchkey tragedies. No; all day long the voters sauntered in, independent and enlightened. Dusk fell, the poll closed, and the election was over. Did the citizens crowd with one accord into the streets and hoot and cheer till the result came? Did they turn night into day, chance life and limb, shout themselves hoarse and ruin their clothes? Nay, nay. With patience they waited for the next mail, and then in comfort and safety scanned their newspapers by their stove sides. The silent member went back to boost his country and his district, the editor pocketed his profits, and before the first blizzard blew the inhabitants of the little frontier town were thinking more about Christmas than politics.

CANADIAN COLD.

A GOOD deal is heard about the Canadian winter, the "Arctic cold" which many English people fear they could not stand. Despite the pictures of harvest fields—and they are usually harvest fields!—most folk when they think of Canada picture her for most of the year as "My lady of the snows," and believe the hardy settler dodges between the blizzards, befurred to suffocation. -

There is not the slightest wish on the part of the Westerner to under-estimate his winter climate; but he does like people to have some inkling of the true state of affairs, and not think of him as an Esquimau.

Speaking of the Middle West—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and much of Alberta—winter lasts from the middle or end of November to the middle or end of March, and it is the real, genuine article, with no humbug about it.

Imagine yourself sitting in your shack on the prairies on a winter's night. The windows are white with half an inch of frost, although the stove in the middle of the room may be roaring and the air be drowsily warm. If you were to let the fire down, before long the frost would come creeping in. Whispering along behind the wall paper, and, making the furniture creak, he would wax bolder as the fire sank. At last even the stove itself would

tick and crack in its grip. But, avast, there! Heave on a log? There are coal and wood on the prairies, and only carelessness and ignorance cause people to freeze.

In many parts free wood can be had, that is if a long, cold journey and a hard day's work make a thing free. For usually the good wheat land is treeless, and the settler has to travel to the nearest broken country for wood, many miles away.



CANADIAN COLD.

Sometimes a blizzard howls for three days on end. It is dangerous work being on the trail then, and even the little prairie towns are half smothered in ever-changing snowdrifts. The wind whisks your breath away and leaves you gasping, searing the face like a hot iron. Over and round and through everything the grey pall of sweeping snow-dust flies, stinging and bewildering. It is a fight to walk a dozen yards then.

Sometimes a brisk breeze and a "cold snap"

coincide. Then, if you are out long, your nose gives a warning prick, and unless you rub the place with snow, it will freeze. A cloud of steam eddies round the open front door, and a big feather trails from every chimney.

Still, if you think you could survive these experiences occasionally, you would positively revel in the North-West winter. For high winds and blizzards are the exception, and "cold snaps" intermittent. Usually the sun shines like a ball of white brass on to an earth dazzling, motionless, but an absolutely intoxicating place for anything alive.

The dryness of the air gives one small inkling of what the thermometer is doing. A little exertion and coat and mitts are irksome. And "exert" you must. The air is wine. No wonder "hustle" is in bone, blood, and tissue of the Westerner.

Domestic arrangements have to fall in with the climate, or the climate very seriously falls out with domestic arrangements. The hired girl must handle the drying clothes like glass, for they freeze where they hang and dry at their leisure, and it is no joke to have chips knocked off the sheets or a tablecloth cracked in two.

Then there must be a big stove which heats all the house, and it has to be kept going day and night; Sundays and Bank Holidays. Otherwise the bread may freeze, the milk all turn to "ice-cream," and the door handles "bite" when you touch them.

The best English wool underwear and all Canadian outside clothes will defy any frost, for there is no such thing as damp cold. You are never "chilled to the marrow," nor does the biting wind

"blow through " you. No, the frost may try conclusions with your fingers, nose, and toes, especially when out driving; but one's body is always warm, and a sprint behind the sleigh—especially in a fur-coat!—sends the hot blood tingling through every vein.

As an example of what not to do, let me give the actual case of an English family, settled in Manitoba.

They determined to show the Canadians how healthy and good the English system of warming is. Their stove—open like an Old Country fireplace—looked nice enough, but left the corners of the room freezing.

Unlucky visitors, who stayed a night, woke up next day worn out supporting the mountain of bed-clothes necessary to keep them warm. They found if they put their nose outside the blankets the frost grabbed it, while their breath wove hoar frost all over the pillow and across the counterpane.

The larder was behind the stove, but as the stove usually went out at night, no wonder the kettle boiled backwards, as it were, until it became a block of ice. No wonder the cat stole silently into the oven and *then* shivered in its dreams!

The potatoes in the cellar froze until they were sweeter than yams. The clocks all struck, and finally the frost took the "temper " out of the steel carving knife.

Then at last these good, but misguided, people gave up trying to reform the Canadian nation. Instead they shut up their stove and let it roar. They banked it up o' nights and kept it glowing, they put double windows and doors all over the house, and

they broke themselves in to going to bed in a warm bedroom. Now their friends like to go and visit them, and they are prosperous and happy.

In Canada do as the Canadians do, and you will marvel when you think of how the poor folk at home go shivering to bed in ice-houses, and sit round little ornamental fires in one corner of the room, above all, *how* you will feel the cold if you come home for a holiday in the winter.

WOLF STORIES.

Is it possible, you wonder, that your cousin out West is liable to be eaten up by the wolves? Few things astonish the home-for-a-holiday Westerner more than the hazy and harrowing beliefs many English people still cherish about Canadian wolves.

They actually think that they hunt travellers, infest forests, and in hard winters even invade the towns, quite like Russia!

Now, the truth is you may travel far and wide over the West, from Winnipeg to the Rockies, from Southern Manitoba to the North Saskatchewan river, and you may travel for long years, and it is doubtful if you will ever see a real wolf. "Prairie wolves," or coyotes ("kü-oots" they call them), abound, but the real blood-curdling, man-eating variety, the bush wolf, is very, very rare. He may lurk in the depths of the vast forests away north, but he troubles the prairie dwellers so little that it is doubtful if most have ever seen one, let alone a pack.

Of course, report magnifies him. Sooner or later an "oldest inhabitant" is sure to show the new arrival "wolf tracks" in the snow the size of which would strike terror even into the breasts of Romulus and Remus.

However, all romance is not fled, for the coyotes do what they can to lend a zest to life, and, incidentally, provide quite respectable sport for the farmer's winter leisure.

About the size of a sheep-dog, cunning as a fox, and swifter than many a horse, they do a considerable amount of damage, so no wonder the Government offers a reward for their ears—if shot; no poisoning allowed. They hunt alone or in pairs in summer, but when the snow flies band together to kill deer, calves, or weakly cattle. If the winter is a mild one and wild rabbits plentiful, however, they are quite content with the smaller prey and trouble the farmer but little. They seem to have an undying enmity for farm dogs. Sometimes the dog will chase one, only in its turn to be chased back when it gets far from the settler's shanty.

One day, while ploughing on a mile furrow, the driver, half-dozing on his iron seat, saw what he took to be a large shaggy dog, a dirty yellow colour like a pariah, trotting up the return furrow, scarce five yards away. Suddenly he realised it was a coyote, and this being his nearest-yet view of one, stopped his horses and stared at it. The wolf returned the stare with interest, and eventually sat down on its haunches with something very much like a grin, for it knew well enough the man had no gun. But he had a rather short temper, so he jumped for a stone suddenly and swiftly. In that moment the wolf was off, its tail between its legs, and with many a backward glance. Once it thought it was out of sight its trot became a gallop, and it veritably flew till it disappeared over the prairie.

The worst of the coyote is his wailing howl. On a still, calm, winter night, especially before a storm, four or five of them begin. First you hear a series of yappings, very dog-like, but that is instantly succeeded by the most blood-curdling howls and wails, which sound like lost spirits bemoaning their miserable lot. Your flesh creeps, and ten to one you snuggle down under the bed-clothes as far as you can. What though you know four or five coyotes are sole cause of all those cadences of horror, and the sturdy barking of your dog drowns the last quaver as it trembles away into silence? As the howling breaks out afresh and nearer you spring with chattering teeth for your gun, when a well-directed shot may ensure you quiet for the rest of *that* night.

Exciting though such an experience is—and some years you may hear scarcely one wolf all winter—it is far worse to be benighted on the trail and have the coyotes howling along behind you. One Christmas Eve a solitary traveller tramped along the trail in Tamarisk Valley, Manitoba. He was an Englishman, and this was his first winter. The moon, dazzlingly bright, shone down on a white world, where scrub and willow marked the courses of the creeks, and undulating whiteness made up the rest of the picture. The road—two winding troughs in the deep snow—was crusted with ice, where the warm sun had shone during the day, and progress was slow and noisy. Wherever he stepped ice shingles broke and cracked. Suddenly, far away in the mountains which hemmed the valley in, rose the long-drawn-out wail of the hungry coyote. Logic is of small help in

such circumstances, and though he knew the coyotes would never dare attack him, he ran clattering along the trail. Then, to his horror, a pack in another direction, but much nearer, answered the first. Occasionally they were all silent, and then if a jack rabbit scurried away from the side of the trail, his hair stood on end. Faster and faster he went, stumbling over ice and through snowdrifts. Another bend in the road would sight home, but all the while the howling came nearer. The last dip. A frozen creek. A small copse, and the bend was reached. He swung through the gate to the joyful barking of his dog, and vowed vigorously never to tramp the midnight trail again. Of course he often did travel it again, for out West one's nerves get used to anything.

So you need have no fear anyone belonging to you will be eaten up by Canadian wolves, though probably they know something already of the weirdness of the coyote's wail.

A DAY IN THE BUSH.

It was very, very early when a distant knocking sounded at the door. It seemed so far away that I lay dreamily wondering what it meant, until suddenly it became louder and I was wide awake.

"All right!"

"Thought you had gone to sleep for the winter," said Will's voice. Will was my brother, and he had been in Manitoba three years when I joined him. Now his voice grew fainter as he descended the stairs muttering more sarcastic pleasantries.

This was the day he was going to introduce me to "bush-work." We were to get two loads of firewood from the distant mountains, and an early start was needed to do it. One keeps one's clothes lying round handy in Canada, and learns to perform lightning toilets, at least Will and I did. He had built his own house, and there was no steam heating. Consequently a light hoar-frost on your pillow in the morning was nothing out of the way. However, a good fire was already going below, and I sat almost on top of the stove absorbing heat and donning my war paint. The finishing touches were cap, mitts, and rubbers, all clumsy, but each the warmest device possible and guaranteed to resist zero.

Outside the snow glittered brightly. Right overhead the Northern lights waved green and yellow streamers across the sky, and though the

coldness of the air took your breath away the first moment, the next it made your blood tingle, for it was crisp and dry, and so full of oxygen as to be almost intoxicating. Instead of walking one wanted to skip and curvet.

"Sultry, isn't it?" inquired Will, with a grin, as I opened the barn door.

"Becher sweet life." The Western slang came glibly. Then we fell to work, silently, furiously. The horses were fed and harnessed, the two cows milked, and the sleighs got ready in no time. This is what "Johnny Canuck" (Canadian "John Bull") calls "hustling." The cold makes it necessary in winter, and it quickly becomes an all-year habit.

Everything ready, we returned to the house. Here the wheat-porridge was already "poof poofing" in the approved porridge style, and Will soon had some rashers of bacon sending forth sweet incense. He was an adept at cooking, having "bached it" for three years. The air, the work, and the novelty make eating and resting, sensations altogether different from what is known about them in England.

Dawn was tingeing the sky with pink when we came in, and daylight followed so quickly that the sun had an eye over the snow e'er we were ready to start. A very red sleepy eye it was too, and it saw us, each mounted perilously on a skeleton sleigh and holding in his eager horses with difficulty. Oat-sheaves, axes, blankets, and plenty of toast and pork completed the equipment. The stove had been put out with the remainder of the tea, the house shut up, and we were off.

The sleighs flew over the trail, sometimes bumping across a rough piece like "bucking bronchos," at others whirling down a slope until sticking-on became a fine art.

Presently the settlement dropped behind, and with it the open country, and we came to better trails and miles of small scrub. After that the trees



A DAY IN THE BUSH.

gradually increased, and then we began to enter the real "bush."

The road, now sloping up towards the mountains, narrowed to a cleft; in places it resembled a tunnel; on every hand walls of standing timber.

The very farthest you could see was but a short way down dim aisles of trunks. The trees are so thick they rise straight up without a twig until the top, and then branches shut out the daylight completely. Partridges and other birds sat on bushes

near-by, and never troubled to stir as the sleighs swung past. Once a huge white owl blinked at us from beneath a spruce tree scarce three yards away, while in one little glade five big black bull moose gazed at the intruders in indignant surprise. But after we had threaded the forest for a few more miles, all at once the trees thinned. We had reached a hill crest, and here was dry firewood galore.

Some hot summer fire had swept a path through the heart of the forest and left behind nothing but black trunks, which stood up dismally against the white snow. The very thing for the settler, though; so we tied, blanketed, and fed the horses, and fell to work.

It gives you thrills of destructive bliss to chop down a big tree. Each blow brings you nearer its heart. First you cut on the side you want it to fall, and then a little higher up on the other side chop steadily. Presently the trunk shudders, then there is a crack, and then, slowly at first, but ever rushing faster, the great column comes to earth, burying itself with a muffled roar amid fountains of snow.

Of course, being quite green, it took me half the day to cut down one tree, but Will just toppled them over. Next, we cut them into lengths, and then the horses drew them to the sleighs with the "logging chain." This is called "skidding," and in two feet of stump-sown snow is exciting enough for anybody. The log has a way of charging at one's legs, trying to batter other stumps out of the ground, up-end over fallen logs, and generally run amuck.

The short winter day slipped past while we worked. There was no telling what the weather was on the plains. In the clearing perfect calm and quiet reigned. Occasionally a "Whiskey Jack"—a big black-and-grey bird—screamed, a flock of snow-birds twittered past, or far away in the depth of the woods some unknown animal called, but most of nature was fast asleep.

A short interval for dinner broke the day's work. Toast and pork. Both frozen hard, but *how* delicious!

About four o'clock we had our loads cut and on, so hitched up and "hit the homeward trail."

As we went down the slope through the woods the going was so good we lay in lazy comfort and dozed. Once out on the plains things were different, though. The sun was almost down and two evil-looking "sun-dogs" shone one on either side of him. The wind, unknown to us in the security of the forest, had risen, and was sending the loose snow flying in blinding clouds. As for the trail itself, there was little of it left visible. We seemed to be ploughing through a wilderness of moving snow; no trail before, no track behind.

However, the horses knew their work. They felt the way with their feet and stuck to it grimly. A frozen creek meant touch and go. Down one bank, a swaying rush across the smooth black ice at the bottom and up the other, with probably a breathless struggle to win the top. Knowledge of driving was worth something now, and Will's eyes twinkled with approval as he stopped his load to watch his young brother "rushing a stiff 'un." Sometimes one of the loads stuck

fast in a drift. Then we had to hitch both teams to it, and, amid much shouting, it was dragged through.

Worst of all, however, the trail "cut off." That was, the runners slid off at the side till they went into soft snow and the load heeled farther and farther. Scrambling up its slope you had to balance on the top, and, with taut reins, yell encouragement to the straining teams as they clawed their way back to the trail and safety. In the wild intoxicating excitement of that homeward drive one forgot numb feet, and felt pioneering was "just all right."

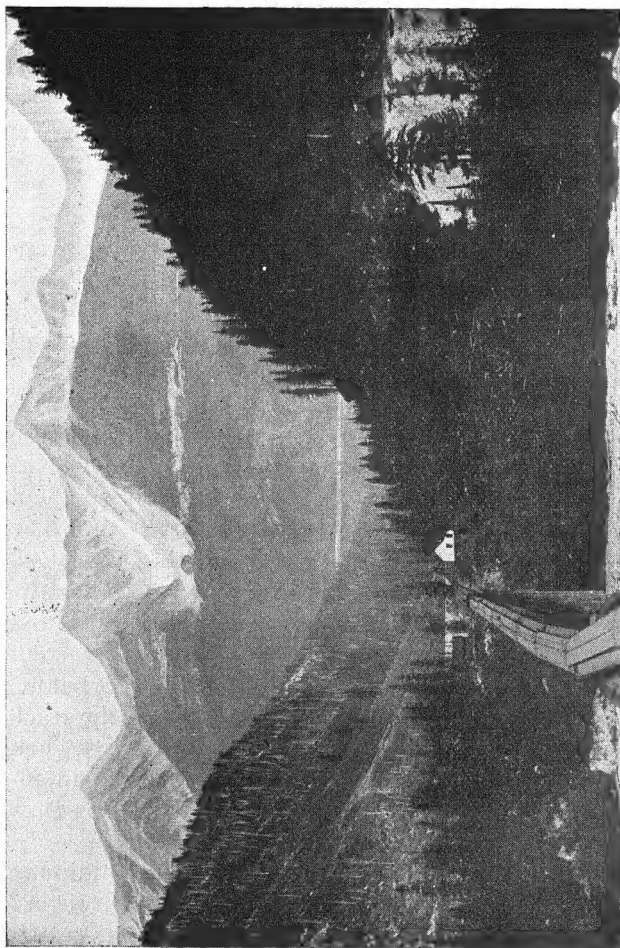
It was almost dark when the lights of the settlement showed ahead, and the stars were shining as we drove into our own corral and unhitched.

A roaring stove, cosy lamplight, frost-encrusted windows, and a lazy evening after a supper that tasted like nectar and ambrosia, fitly ended a first "day in the bush."

AMONG THE ROCKIES.

NOT seen the Rockies! And are you really a Britisher? Well, take the early morning train from Macleod; go in via the Crow's Nest. But don't miss coming out through the Kicking Horse Pass. Even a panorama of golden prairie and blue sky grows monotonous after two days, and for two days you get it, Westward ho! So no wonder everybody becomes excited as, purple in the distance, the great masses of rock heave themselves up out of the yellow sea. Perhaps you cross them at noonday when huge crags hang dizzily on every side, shimmering in the heat, while little blue lakes, clear as crystal, sparkle among the trees. Then the train goes roaring past a precipice, and out on to a giddy trestle bridge with the blue snow torrent churned to a dazzling white hundreds of feet below. Or, perhaps, it is very, very early, when the track along the valley is still in shadow and mist, when the spruce forests stand dark and weird like an encroaching horde, but the snowy mountain-tops glow rosy red in the first rays of coming dawn.

Too many people rush through the mountains to the sea; but suppose you stop off a day at Nelson? Surrounded by towering peaks with the glassy lake below, there are waterfalls and fruit trees everywhere. Electricity and salmon are dirt cheap in Nelson, but they are the only things which are.



AMONG THE ROCKIES.

Board one of the curious stern-paddle steamships and go up the lake to Kaslo. The steamer stops at innumerable little landing-stages, and at most a stolid celestial stands beside a consignment of fruit.

Having had enough blue, green and white—for the lake, the trees and the snow-caps almost blind you—take train to Trail and explore a fruit ranch—an English one. Here every variety of fruit grows. Peaches beside blackberries, plums and “pie-plant,” wax-like pears and apples, and every known and unknown berry. It seems funny to have ordinary English blackberries served up as a delicacy when peaches rot outside, but in Trail blackberries are rarer and more esteemed. Talk about “My Lady of the Snows!” In the Trail valley summer is downright tropical.

If it is not *too* hot follow the zigzag road away up the valley through forest, ferns and fungi, till you reach the rocks and snow again. There is another climate up at Rossland, cold and keen; but men talk in dollars where elsewhere they talk in dimes. On the mountain-top the town is perched, the shafts of a score of mines its claim to existence—gold mines, an you please. The cages rush down to the bowels of the earth, for all the world like Durham, but the miner makes different money, and works different hours. As you take the train down the valley again, are you sorry you paused a day amongst the mountains?

